

Daman territory are more exposed to plunder; while in South Thána the forests of the Kalyán, Murbád, Sháhápúr, and Karjat are robbed much more than the forests of the Bhiwndi, Mokháda, and Khálápúr ranges, which are at a distance from the railway line, and heavy thefts are unknown in them. A numerical increase of forest guards is required in these two divisions especially, for upon stipendiaries whose *raison d'être* is forest conservancy, can alone dependence be placed for protecting the Government trees. A son of the police pátíl of Wángni stole a quantity of teak timber from the Kalamboti Kusheoli forests of the Karjat Range, and conveyed it to the Wángni Railway Station under the name of timber from private lands, but he was caught at last, and was undergoing prosecution at the close of the year. With railway stations and with bandars in all directions, at each of which several timber-dealers' yards are located, where wood brought by villagers is purchased without inquiry as to how it has been obtained, and from where it has come, and is sent off to Bombay and Poona at once, and with a population of 90,000 wild tribes, such as Kathkaris, Thákurs, Varlis, whose subsistence is "Wood," and in addition to them at least half of the inhabitants of forest and other villages living upon carrying and carting at the season when agriculture does not demand their time and attention, the difficulties of protection against theft in the absence of a pass system are very great.

81. The number of cattle impounded in the several divisions during the year, under Section 69 of the Forest Act, for trespassing in closed portions of forest reservations was large in the Deccan divisions, as the following table shows:—

| No. | Forest Division. | Cows and Bullocks. | Buffa- loes. | Camels. | Horses. | Asses. | Sheep. | Goats. | Total. |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1 | North Thána ... | 172 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 172 |
| 2 | South Thána ... | 70 | 4 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 74 |
| 3 | East Khándesh ... | 2,520 | 292 | ... | 14 | ... | 1,853 | 1,486 | 6,165 |
| 4 | West Khándesh ... | 830 | 207 | 8 | 1 | ... | 3,334 | 637 | 5,017 |
| 5 | Násik ... | 5,379 | 487 | ... | 73 | ... | 1,318 | 9,359 | 16,616 |
| 6 | Ahmednagar ... | 25,611 | 2,115 | ... | 329 | 175 | 25,371 | 5,980 | 59,581 |
| 7 | Poona ... | 8,684 | 368 | ... | 200 | 83 | 9,770 | 4,800 | 23,905 |
| 8 | Sátára ... | 4,403 | 662 | ... | 70 | 1 | 3,366 | 1,026 | 9,528 |
| 9 | Sholápúr ... | 9,524 | 1,090 | ... | 88 | 46 | 4,982 | 669 | 16,399 |
| 10 | Surat ... | 55 | 33 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 88 |
| 11 | Panch Maháls ... | 16 | 89 | ... | ... | ... | 332 | 856 | 1,293 |
| | Total ... | 57,264 | 5,347 | 8 | 775 | 305 | 50,326 | 24,813 | 1,38,838 |

82. Two beat guards were prosecuted by the Divisional Forest Officer of Ahmednagar for receiving bribes in connection with grazing in forests: one was convicted and punished, and the other acquitted; and 3 range forest officers, 2 round guards, and 19 beat guards were prosecuted by villagers for illegally impounding cattle for assault, &c., of which number 1 round guard and 4 beat guards were convicted. The round guard and 1 of the 3 beat guards have appealed.

83. 13,860 cattle found trespassing in the forest reserves of the Sholápúr Division were released with a first warning, in accordance with the orders contained in Government Resolution No. 2437, dated 21st March 1885.

(C)—FOREST FIRES.

84. Fire-conservancy during the year shows a decided improvement in North Thána: in the Sálsette, Dáhánu, and Umbargaon ranges especially have the results been satisfactory. In Bassein fire traces were burnt as usual by the forest subordinates. In South Thána also is fire-conservancy improving: there were 201 fires reported during the year. In the Khándesh District fires prevailed to a slightly greater extent in the western division; in the eastern side there were 27 fires—one starting from Holkar's territory adjoining the Yával Sátputás is responsible for burning 12,500 acres despite the efforts made to check and

extinguish it. In 7 cases in this division people who fired the forests were caught: 3 of the 7 cases were compounded, and the other 4 prosecuted, with the result that 1 was acquitted, 1 was fined Rs. 2, 1 received simple imprisonment for 8 days, and another rigorous imprisonment for one month. The area traversed by fire in the Násik Division has been double as much as that burnt last year; 3 ranges—Niphád, Chándvad and Málegaon—were entirely free from fires; the Niphád forests have been closed for some years, and have never been visited by fires. In the Ahmednagar Division 17 fires covered about twice as much ground as they did last year, but the proportion burnt is very small; one range only—Kopargaon—saw no forest fire. In the Sátára Division 2,577 acres only were burnt, and nearly 2,374 of this occurred in one range—Pátan. In the Sholápur Division the forest fires have been on the increase, but only 24 reserves were visited by them, and in the Bársi, Málsiras, and Pandharpur ranges no fires occurred. In the Surat Division a considerable portion of the forests in the Mándvi Range and in the Dángs was traversed by fire. In the Panch Maháls a marked improvement in fire-conservancy is noticeable in all the ranges save Hálol, where the forests round and up the slopes of Pavagad hill were burnt.

85. The following statement shows the forest areas in the different divisions, the portion which has been traversed by fire during the year, and the percentage the latter bears to the former :—

| No. | Divisions. | Forest Acreage. | Acreage burned. | Percentage burned. |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | North Thána ... | 3,73,993 | 25,803 | 6.9 |
| 2 | South Thána ... | 3,95,803 | 16,952 | 4.3 |
| 3 | East Khándesh ... | 4,93,101 | 21,028 | 4.2 |
| 4 | West Khándesh ... | 7,66,237 | 42,496 | 5.5 |
| 5 | Násik ... | 7,10,949 | 12,210 | 1.7 |
| 6 | Ahmednagar ... | 5,44,048 | 3,315 | 0.6 |
| 7 | Poona ... | 4,62,101 | 1,691 | 0.3 |
| 8 | Sátára ... | 4,22,160 | 2,577 | 0.6 |
| 9 | Sholápur ... | 1,49,065 | 2,135 | 1.4 |
| 10 | Surat ... | 6,20,284 | 33,347 | 5.3 |
| 11 | Panch Maháls ... | 2,06,957 | 14,809 | 7.1 |
| Total ... | | 51,44,698 | 1,76,363 | 3.4 |

86. On the whole, fire-conservancy in the circle is extremely satisfactory. In the Deccan forests it is practically perfect, and no smaller percentage will be found anywhere. In the Konkan, improvement is visible, and also in the Panch Maháls. The Khándesh forests and the Dángs and Mándvi are about the worst examples, but there are special reasons which make fire-conservancy difficult in these tracts. No special establishments are employed upon fire-conservancy, as no special establishments could in the circumstances of the forests be employed with any advantage. A sustained improvement in all branches of forest conservancy and works ought to be the aim of the Forest Department in India; and this can, as far as the forests of the Northern Circle are concerned, be best secured, both as regards economy and results beneficial to forests, by permanent establishments being taught how to perform the different duties of protection &c., and by inducing villagers to co-operate with forest subordinates in preserving forests against visitations by fire and in extinguishing fires when they do occur: in this view, rewards are given to villagers for the labour provided and the ready assistance tendered by them in burning fire traces and in fighting against and putting out fires. The expenditure in the year on these accounts has amounted to Rs. 470-7-9.

(D)—GRAZING AND FODDER GRASS.

87. The grass and grazing revenues of the forests of the Northern Circle during the period since the famine and since the forests have been established under the Forest Act have shown a steady increase, and this result has been a